

Christopher Starbuck House  
105 Main Street  
Nantucket  
Nantucket County  
Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-939

HABS  
MASS  
10-NANT  
55-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20240

## CHRISTOPHER STARBUCK HOUSE

HABS  
MASS  
10-NANT  
55-

Location: 105 Main Street (on north side of Main Street  
at northeast corner of Gardner Street),  
Nantucket, Massachusetts

Present Owner: Charles A. Kilvert

Present Occupant: Kilvert family

Present Use: Residence

Brief Statement  
of Significance: One of few surviving late seventeenth century  
lean-to houses, half of it may have been moved  
from site of earlier settlement; relatively  
unaltered, since completed c. 1757.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: It is believed that the old part of the house was moved in from Sherburne by Christopher Starbuck and the west part added by him around 1757. Christopher died in 1762, leaving the property to his son Tristram Starbuck. Zaccheus Starbuck, Tristram's son, lived in the house for many years but died in 1766 before his father, whereupon Tristram Starbuck when he died in 1789, left the house to his daughter Lydia Starbuck Gifford. Upon her death c. 1865, it was inherited by her daughter, Sarah C. Tobey (Mrs. Benjamin G. Tobey), who was born in the house in 1842. Mrs. Tobey lived here until she died in 1923. The house was owned for a few years by Edward F. Sanderson, who restored it and sold the property in 1932 to Mrs. Mary F. Breckinridge (Mrs. Desha Breckinridge). She sold it in 1937 to Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Kilvert, and Mr. Kilvert is the present owner.

1690 and 1757 -- Christopher Starbuck  
1762 -- Tristram Starbuck and his son Zaccheus  
1789 -- Mrs. Lydia Starbuck Gifford  
c. 1865 -- Mrs. Sarah C. Tobey  
1928 -- Edward F. Sanderson  
1932 -- Mrs. Mary F. Breckinridge  
1937 -- Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Kilvert  
1962 to date -- Mr. Charles A. Kilvert

2. Date of erection: From structural evidence, authorities believe the old part of the house was built about 1690

and moved in from old Sherburne when Christopher Starbuck built his home at the present site at the time when Gardner Street was laid out. Facing the street at a slant, thus conforming with the original street lines, this house presents a graphic picture of the olden day. It consists of two incorporated sections -- the original east end and the west end which was added some time between 1729 and 1757. The latter date appears on the wall of an upstairs closet.

3. Architect: Unknown
  4. Original plans, construction, etc.: The house in reality is two houses in one, with the east end earlier than the west. Douglas-Lithgow, historian, in an article in the Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror under date of August 19, 1911, stated, "From its fireplace and oven, the cedar frames to windows, long northern roof sloping down to lean-to, in addition to peculiarities of construction -- I believe this section was built during the first quarter of the eighteenth century. The house now standing is a two-story lean-to, which might indicate a later age, but some of the peculiarities of the east end render it possible that this section was built wherever it came from soon after." The very large fireplace in the east section has an oven at its back, indicating that the room was once a kitchen or "hall". The dining-room in the western half of the house is smaller than the room on the east and has a much smaller fireplace.
  5. Notes on alterations and additions: When the house was restored in the 1920's only the sills had to be replaced. Sills in the earliest houses were laid directly on the ground and were therefore the first part of the framing to rot. Today its oak summer beams, girts and corner posts, the huge fireplaces and their mantles and the wide pine floor boards are all restored to their original condition. The modern paper and plaster were removed from the walls.
- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: The custom of moving old buildings into the new town at Nantucket was due to the fact that there were almost no trees on the Island which could be used for building purposes. As a result, all the wood for the houses had to be brought in from the mainland at considerable cost, thereby necessitating the re-use of any lumber already present on the Island.

"The new house was not laid out according to the existing street lines, but rather it was oriented due south in agreement with a strict compass reading." (Abstract, A Mirror of Nantucket by Fowlkes) Note: Here are two versions for

the reason that the house faces the street at a slant. Edouard A. Stackpole in his Ramblings stated that it was so built to conform to the original atreet linea.

C. Sourcea of Information:

1. Old Views: Old photograph in Nantucket Lands and Land Owners by Henry Barnard Worth; drawing in Nantucket, the Far-Away Ialand by William Oliver Stevens, 1936; three photographs in House Beautiful magazine, September, 1934; photograph Sunday Standard-Times, New Bedford, Mass., February 24, 1957.

2. Bibliography:

Douglas-Lithgow, Robert Alexander. (article), Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror, Auguat 19, 1911.

Fowlkes, George Allen. A Mirror of Nantucket, An Architectural History of The Island, 1686-1850. New Jersey: Presa of Interstate, 1959.

Stackpole, Edouard A. Rambling Through the Streets and Lanea of Nantucket. New Bedford, 1947.

Prepared by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin  
Nantucket, Massachusetts  
July, 1965

PART II. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared for the Historic American Buildings Survey project on Nantucket, Massachusetts. They are part of a continuing HABS comprehenaive survey of the early architecture and urban design of Nantucket financed by a grant from the Nantucket Historical Trust.

The project was under the ganeral supervision of Jamea C. Masaey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Hiatorical information was provided by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin of Nantucket, Massachusetts. Photographs are by Cortlandt V. D. Hubbard of Philadelphia, Pennayl-vania. The material was edited for deposit in the Library of Congress by Mrs. Constance Werner Ramirez, July 1971.

Addendum to:  
CHRISTOPHER STARBUCK HOUSE  
105 Main Street  
Nantucket  
Nantucket County  
Massachusetts

HABS No. MA-939

HABS  
MASS  
10-NANT,  
55-

REDUCED COPIES OF DRAWINGS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
PRESERVATION INSTITUTE: NANTUCKET  
University of Florida  
Department of Architecture  
Gainesville, Florida 32611-2004